

Earmarks

The
Truth about Earmarks: From
Highway 4 to After School Programs in
Fairfield

Many
visitors to my website have undoubtedly heard the term
“earmark.” Often times it can be associated with a health
center or a highway in your community, and still, sometimes used an
example of “business as usual” in Washington
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I
want to clear the air about what an earmark is and how they affect
you and your family.

I
believe that

Washington

works best when we are open and honest with the people we serve.
This is why I want to share with you the process behind earmarks and
keep you up to date with what I have requested for

California

’s 10th Congressional District.

The
Office
of Management and Budget (OMB) defines earmarks as
“namely specified funds for
projects, activities, or institutions not requested by the
executive, or add-ons to requested funds which Congress directs for
specific activities." Thus, an earmark is
simply any spending on any project that is not explicitly in the
President’s budget.

Every
year after the State of the Union address, the President submits his
budget to the Congress and both Democrats and Republicans review it
and begin a debate about how to allocate the finite amount of

resources needed to fund every operation of the federal government
– from Pell grants for college to the FBI and everything in
between.

Article

I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution gave Congress the power to direct the appropriations of money, as well. This legislatively directed spending is what is often referred to as earmarks. The earmarking process is a regular part of allocating funds within the federal government. Each of the appropriations subcommittees have their own practices for determining whether and what kind of projects they are willing to earmark, and each sets rules for how earmark requests are to be received from Members of Congress.

After

my colleagues and I submit earmark requests, the chairmen of the relevant committee determines whether or not to approve each earmark. Each of the appropriating and authorizing committees and subcommittees has their own practices for determining whether and what kind of projects they are willing to earmark. And each sets rules for how earmark requests are to be received from Members of Congress.

My

colleagues and I are turning what was once a shadowy process into a transparent look at how our government works. This year, Democrats made ethics reform one of top priorities when taking control of the Congress. As such, earmarks now for the first time ever have the requesting legislator's name alongside the project and Members of Congress must send a letter with each request and certify they have no personal financial stake in the project.

Earmarks

serve a variety of purposes. As for me, I only request earmarks that fall into three very distinct categories. Ones that aim to make our communities better places to live and work, ones that promote national security and relate to my subcommittee Chairmanship of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, and ones that reduce traffic congestion and relate to my seat on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. It is important to note that all transportation funding is done by means of earmarking as the President never requests money for specific highway projects. Every request I make must directly benefit

California's 10th Congressional District, or I will not request

it.

Click
here to take a look at all of the requests I have made so far this
year.

As
you can see, earmarking is used for funding projects both large and
small. And, what's most important to me, it's one of the
best ways to ensure the hardworking people in California's 10th
District are getting their fair share of tax dollars put to work
where it matters most – where we live and work.

Separate
from earmarks, some federal funds are allocated through the grants
process. Like earmarks, grants directly benefit local
communities' efforts to fight
crime, educate
children, or a number of other important efforts. You can
get information on grants that may be available to you by
subscribing to my eGrants
newsletter.

I
urge everyone to either check back here or call any of my offices
with any questions that they may have.

Sincerely,

Ellen O. Tauscher